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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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BRIEFING NOTE 2

The second of a series of
Project Mirabal briefing notes -
see www.dur.ac.uk/criva/project-mirabal for more information.

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INTRODUCTION

SINCE THE 1970S, THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT HAS CAMPAIGNED TO BRING THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO THE SOCIAL AGENDA. YET, ALL TOO OFTEN, THE MEN WHO PERPETRATE VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST THEIR PARTNERS HAVE REMAINED ABSENT, AND LEFT TO CONTINUE THEIR ABUSIVE REGIME. THE NEED TO ADDRESS THIS ABSENCE WAS THE BASIS UPON WHICH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES (DVPPS) EMERGED.



The Duluth Model is one of the most widely known approaches but was designed, not as a perpetrator programme per se, but as a broader systemic response to domestic violence in the city of Duluth, Minnesota, USA. When this 'co-ordinated community response' (CCR) was implemented, its success generated a backlog of men who had been arrested but not imprisoned for domestic violence. The men's programme was developed as a solution to this unanticipated consequence (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

There has been relatively little documented about the emergence and development of British Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes (DVPPs). The most substantial British review was conducted in the mid 1990s, which consisted of a telephone survey of 23 British therapeutic and educational programmes for domestically violent men (Scourfield, 1994; Scourfield & Dobash, 1999). This survey found programmes to be predominantly cognitive-behavioural in orientation, with half the programmes taking both criminal justice and non-criminal justice mandated men. The authors note an overall feeling of optimism in the mid-1990s, linked to a strong liberal humanist tradition within the probation service and renewed rehabilitative optimism based on emerging research on the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural approaches to reoffending.

Almost 20 years have passed since this telephone survey took place, and the criminal justice and wider socio-political context in which DVPPs operate has changed enormously. The purpose of this briefing note is to document the development of British DVPPs

from their emergence through to current day.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research draws on interviews with 16 participants involved in DVPPs. The majority of these were what can be best described as ‘sector leaders’, meaning that they have been programme developers, managers, and practitioners from the early days – many also holding national development or policy positions or holding national conferences and/or meetings. The other interviewees were key stakeholders from probation, local authority, and women’s organisations.

Recruitment was through a process of snowball sampling and interviews ranged from approximately half hour up to two hours or more. Interviewees were asked to relate their experiences of the emergence and development of the DVPP, with reference to their personal understandings of the socio-political context in which the programme emerged, how the programme fitted in to wider domestic violence responses in their locality, and, for those directly involved, the origins,

adaptation and development of the content and approach.

Archived documents held by The Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU) at London Metropolitan University, Respect, and Standing Together (both voluntary and community sector domestic violence organisations) were analysed and have been used to add both detail and further depth to the interviews.

KEY FINDINGS

BRITISH DVPPS HAVE DEVELOPED THROUGH ONGOING REFLECTIONS ON A RICH DIVERSITY OF PRACTICE, UNDERPINNED BY A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

The Duluth men's programme, developed by Ellen Pence and Micheal Paymar, was widely cited by interviewees as a key influence on British work. However, therapeutic based approaches (predominantly Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

(CBT), Gestalt, and the 'invitational' model introduced by Alan Jenkins in his 1990 book 'Invitations to Responsibility') were also mentioned as being particularly influential. This supports Hamilton et al's (2012) review of 54 European programmes, which found that most programmes applied cognitive behavioural, profeminist, or psychodynamic treatment, with nearly half using a combination of multiple treatment types.

This combination of Duluth men's programme with various therapeutic influences formed the broad framework of early programmes – usually delivered in a group work format and developed from a small number of key guides (Scotland's CHANGE manual, London's Domestic Violence Intervention Project's (DVIP) manual, and the Ahimsa guidelines). However, this has never been static. From their inception, individual programmes have developed and adapted the work in dynamic ways drawing on a range of practice experiences and knowledges. An important part of their evolution occurred through processes of intense critical reflection, discussion and sharing

of practice and critique through a National Practitioner's Network (NPN) which ran for 18 years between 2002-2010 (discussed later), and the invitation of external scrutiny from women's groups, criminal justice professionals and academics. In this way, programmes developed through a methodical implementation of practice-based evidence, combined with the little research that was available.

“There is a long history of work that’s about engaging people in self-reflexive change work, so there are a whole series of mechanisms and approaches for that engagement, which you just adapt. So we know about group exercises and externalising internal stuff so people can look at it, finding creative mechanisms [...] so there are all these sort of processes and ideas you adapt and use.”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

“We had the training from North America, people coming over, we went over ourselves, and we were also looking at other areas that might influence what we were doing.”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

Problematic here, however, was the widespread tendency to draw on the Duluth men's DVPP whilst neglecting to implement the rest of the Duluth CCR system. This was more pronounced in England than Scotland - with the exception of Robyn Holder's vision for the London Borough of Hammersmith in which DVIP were seen as an important part of a wider CCR. Whilst many community programmes did not have the resources and power to implement a full scale CCR, this was seen to have manifested in the most contradictory way when the probation service drew upon the Duluth men's programme for their own domestic violence programmes:

“Really you could only ethically put a perpetrator programme in a

coordinated community response. That has been a massive problem, people trying to just run them in isolation.”

(Women’s Service Developer)

“[men’s programmes] weren’t the centre of the Duluth approach at all. They were a component of the Duluth approach – too many people seem to go away and take that out of it as the thing that they would do.”

(Stakeholder)

Therefore, ‘Duluth’ has increasingly been seen in English approaches as being synonymous with a perpetrator programme rather than with the whole community perpetrator accountability system that it was and still is.

WOMEN’S AID WERE DESCRIBED AS SIMULTANEOUSLY A SITE OF CONTENTION AND A CRITICAL ALLY

Prior to the emergence of DVPPs in the late 80s/early 90s, domestic violence activism and practice had mainly focused on the protection of women and children. Feminists and women’s groups rarely dealt with abusive men beyond the drive to bring criminal sanctions for domestic abuse offences into the policy arena. The concept of ‘working with men’ was a huge cultural shift for some feminists and women’s groups concerned with domestic violence. While some embraced the work wholeheartedly and were influential in setting up and running DVPPs in their area, this was not always the case, as some of the interviewees described:

“We were seen to have gone over to the dark side; that these men didn’t deserve this; that if work with men took off – a very real fear – funding for women will disappear because men are more powerful and they will attract greater money.”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

“I think a lot of women were very untrusting of the work with perpetrators and often really rightly so. There was a massive amount of dangerous practice going on at that time. I think we’ve really got to remember that – that women’s concerns about perpetrator work were really valid.”

(Integrated Women’s Support Work Developer)

This overlaps with Scourfield & Dobash (1999), who found that when asked about experiencing resistance to establishing projects, 87% said they had, with the main sources of resistance being women’s refuge organisations and, perhaps more surprisingly, professionals in social services. They found that regular, formal, contact with Women’s Aid was rare (just 17% of programmes). As one of the key actors in the field, Women’s Aid was often discussed by our interviewees as simultaneously a site of contention

and a critical ally. Documents from a number of workshops and meetings held by Women’s Aid in the early 1990s (Respect archive; CWASU archive) demonstrate the concern about perpetrator programmes, but also the willingness and honesty of their internal interrogation of the issues and the implications for their own political and ethical position. However, what is also clear is that many DVPPs worked very hard to bring these groups on board, to be transparent, and to demonstrate their own bottom-line commitment to the safety of women and children. This was perhaps legitimised, in part, by the feminist credentials of the Duluth programme, despite the contradictions discussed above of importing the men’s programme without the full CCR system and calling it ‘Duluth’. Interviewees spoke of the pressures of needing to demonstrate that they were, in fact, working towards the same feminist goals whilst at the same time trying to explore a new way of holding men to account.

“On a social movement level, what was happening was people were trying to set up work with men that was working alongside feminist organisations. It just had some interesting knock on effects down the line, I think, in the sense that I think they had to be more feminist than the feminists in order to show their badges.”

(Programme Facilitator)

“I said something [at a meeting with Women’s Aid] about the men having a break for coffee and they were like ‘Coffee? You give them coffee? And biscuits?’ [laughing] That was the thing: ‘How could you give them biscuits!’”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

“Within the Women’s Aid movement there was certainly a lot of resistance to us doing the work at all. But we always had very good kind of personal relationships with the Women’s Aid people. And to a large extent they were our conscience in the early days because of their scepticism. ”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

THE NATIONAL PRACTITIONERS’ NETWORK RAN FOR 18 YEARS AND WAS FUNDAMENTAL TO DEVELOPMENT OF BRITISH DVPPS

The CHANGE Conference, in 1992, was the first time DVPP workers from around the country had the opportunity to meet and share ideas. Featuring key-note speeches from Duluth founders, Ellen Pence and Michael Paymar, it was also

attended by Women's Aid and other key stakeholders. It was this conference that gave birth to the idea of a national practitioners' network (NPN). An informal gathering, the NPN met every six months until 2010, hosted by different DVPPs in turn, and provided a crucial space for practitioners to discuss, debate, and reflect on practice and innovations. Interviewees were very positive about the vibrancy and importance of the NPN to the success and development of the still emerging DVPP sector.

"[The NPN was] a great forum basically for people to talk about practice, learn off people [...] and just basically talk about the 'untalkables': 'what do we think about provocation [...] what does it actually mean?' So we were in a forum that was allowed to debate because it was bottom up."

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

"There were a lot more people involved, very vibrant atmosphere in the practitioners network of people, still stumbling into doing the work but very exciting, people wanting to know how to do stuff and sharing ideas and learning from each other, and a lot of people just getting on with it and getting stuck in."

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

In 1998, the NPN began the process of developing a membership-based organisation to run alongside the network meetings. This membership organisation was named Respect, the national association for DVPPs and associated support services, and was launched in 2001. One of the most important themes to their work was formalising what started life in 1994 as the NPN 'Statement of Principles', becoming in 2004 the Respect 'Statement of Principles and Minimum Standards of Practice for Domestic Violence

Perpetrator Programmes and Associated Women's Services'. Managing the accreditation of perpetrator programmes through its Respect Accreditation Standards (2008; 2012) remains a central and important part of Respect's work today.

Alongside the accreditation of perpetrator programmes, Respect develop, deliver and support effective services for: male and female perpetrators of domestic violence; young people who use violence and abuse at home and in relationships; and men who are victims of domestic violence. Their new tag line is 'men and women working together to end domestic violence' and their services include: running the Respect Phoneline for domestic violence perpetrators and professionals who would like further information about services; the Men's Advice Line for men experiencing domestic violence; support for members; and providing a national voice on men's violence against women (see www.respect.uk.net for a full list of services).

'GETTING WHIPPED FROM BOTH SIDES' – A LACK OF CLARITY ABOUT WHAT DVPPS DO

As mentioned earlier, DVPPs often struggled to establish their legitimacy - not only with women's groups but also with social services and other professionals (including academics). This is still the case to some extent today. Interviewees explained that while some tended to believe that perpetrator programmes would not treat men harshly enough, other groups believed the programmes treated men too harshly - shaming and humiliating men on a weekly basis.

“There was also a kind of resistance from the other side as well, there was a resistance to an analysis that said this is the patriarchy, that you needed to have a programme that held men responsible and there was still at that stage quite a lot of resistance to the message that domestic

abuse was serious criminal behaviour. So we were kind of stuck in the middle, we were squeezed from one side who thought that we were feminist nutters and squeezed from the other side that said how can you bear to work with men.”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

Being caught between these opposing views was described by another interviewee as “getting whipped from both sides” (Programme Developer/Facilitator), whilst another described presenting a paper at the regional conference for the British Psychological Society and being “not quite being booed off, but being seen as a sort of feminist nutcase” (Programme Developer). Behind these responses was a series of misunderstandings about the realities of DVPPs – some of which still persist today. The developers of early programmes met these challenges with their customary openness, inviting their critics to come and observe the group work,

to participate in their advisory groups, and to evaluate their programmes. They braved the cultural dissent and insisted upon their “place at the table”, being “completely clear that we are there as part of the solution to domestic violence” (Integrated Women’s Support Work Developer).

Many of the misunderstandings belie the reality of the diversity and development of DVPPs from the outset - processes of adaptation, amalgamation and innovation were present from the very beginning. Whilst the bottom line for all Respect members and accredited programmes remains the focus on men’s accountability for their violence and abuse, this is heavily influenced by but has not come solely from the Duluth model. One early programme developer, for example, described how a project which was originally set up by men for men, to examine and challenge male on male violence, evolved into a DVPP because the men who came along were more concerned about their domestic violence.

“The whole principles and structure of the work has been developed from work with the men, it didn’t really owe anything ... well it had no connection to domestic abuse programmes generally in the same way, it had nothing to do with Duluth.”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

All interviewees that had developed programmes spoke about the processes of adapting programmes, through listening and being responsive to the men in groups, drawing on a wide range of approaches and experiences – a far cry from the caricature of programmes as monolithic and ‘one-size-fits-all’.

“The approach is ‘listen to men’ and if you’re going to say the approach is listen to men, you’re not finger-wagging, you’re not imposing a way of thinking on people, you’re

not challenging every time the C-word is used, you’re not making a load of rules, because rules don’t change people. You are creating an atmosphere where men can genuinely explore their beliefs and their fears and their insecurities. They can try out new ways of thinking. They can speak about them and see what the response of their peers is, challenge comes from other men much more significantly than it does from the workers. One of the mantras is that you trust the process, you don’t just say ‘this is the message that I’ve got to get across tonight’. The programme is designed to invite people to have shades of grey in their thinking.”

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

It is true that some practitioners felt they were perhaps a little harsh in the very early stages, due to their inexperience and the pressures upon them to be stridently anti-collusive, but they very quickly realised this was not the most appropriate or effective way of working. All interviewees spoke of the ways they had come to work with men in a responsive and sensitive way whilst still very clearly holding them to account.

WORKING TOGETHER/WORKING APART: VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR WORKING WITH STATE OFFENDER SERVICES TOOK A VERY DIFFERENT TURNING POINT IN THE MID 1990S IN SCOTLAND COMPARED TO ENGLAND AND WALES.

The first programmes in England and Wales emerged from concern with male violence being discussed within men's groups. These programmes, and subsequent

ones which developed throughout England and Wales, worked very closely with the Probation Service: many were funded by probation, run in conjunction with probation, had a mixture of criminal justice mandated and 'voluntary' men, and were often facilitated by probation officers. Interviewees explained that whilst there were always tensions working this closely, it was an alliance which seemed to work well for a number of years.

In 2005 the Probation Service in England and Wales moved away from this model and began delivering their own programmes for criminal justice mandated men: the Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP), which was modelled on the Duluth men's programme, and the Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP), as a more generic criminal justice programme for domestic violence. This was probably linked to an increasing recognition of the seriousness and extent of domestic violence – with an associated rise in its political currency.

There was also a wider changing socio-political landscape in the

statutory, and ultimately the voluntary and community sector. A move towards business-style management, begun in the Thatcher era and taken up by New Labour after their election in 1997, saw a raft of public sector reforms. This is sometimes referred to as 'New Public Management' (NPM), and is characterised by its focus on efficiency, competition, outcomes and targets. In England and Wales, the Probation Service's decision to develop and run their own domestic violence programmes was seen as linked to these socio-political shifts. However, it was this very concern with efficiency, competition, outcomes, and targets, that interviewees felt led to the Probation Service DVPPs being, in their opinion, too tightly 'manualised', not responsive enough, delivered by unskilled and inexperienced staff, and lacking a robust women's support service.

I was a treatment manager on IDAP then. I struggled a great deal with being a treatment manager ... I was okay with IDAP, liked IDAP, it was alright as a way

to work but I struggled as a worker with the manuals because they were so rigid, so prescribed, it didn't feel very responsive, didn't feel very holistic, didn't feel very organic. It was constraining to actually do the work and it felt very constraining in the way that Probation viewed being a treatment manager, the way I was expected to do it.

(Programme Developer/Facilitator)

In many ways, these practitioner concerns have been borne out. Two Home Office evaluations (Bilby & Hatcher, 2004; Bullock, Sarre, Tarling, & Wilkinson, 2010) of Probation Service DVPPs have identified variable quality in terms of group work and supervision, risk management, co-work between women's and men's workers, and differential access to training.

At the time of writing, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in England and Wales are currently implementing the Building

Better Relationships (BBR) programme to replace IDAP and CDVP within Probation. Whilst the new programme is described as “an evolution, rather than a sea-change” (NOMS developer) from the Duluth-inspired IDAP, it is further explained as:

“A much more kind of generalised aggression model ... it’s a much more psychological and sociological approach I think to explain domestic violence. It’s more about the individual, and the function of the violence, and their individual pathway into the use of violence in their relationships.”

(NOMS developer)

This move away from a gendered analysis of domestic violence, plans to make BBR commercially available beyond the Probation Service and a lack of transparency about the programme and its evaluation has led to some within the voluntary and community DVPP sector feeling

saddened that the close working relationships of the early days and energy of the NPN are long gone.

In Scotland, the situation is very different. Programmes in Scotland first emerged within a criminal justice context and worked with criminal justice mandated men only. Even today, there is currently only one long-standing non criminal justice based programme in Scotland. Recent years have seen the development of the Caledonian System, which incorporates a women’s and a children’s service alongside a Scottish Government-accredited men’s programme which is used by both criminal justice and non criminal justice mandated men. Designed and rolled out by the original developers of Scottish programmes, on secondment to the Scottish Government, the Caledonian System in its collaborative way of working is in marked contrast to developments south of the border. Importantly, it involves partnership working between the voluntary and community and the statutory sector, and involves a whole system approach to tackling domestic violence rather than a programme.

CONCLUSIONS – THE CONTINUED RESPONSIVENESS, ADAPTION AND INNOVATION OF BRITISH DVPPS

British DVPPs have always demonstrated a propensity to adapt in innovative ways to changing policy landscapes and political debates. Rising to the challenges of loss of funding revenues when criminal justice mandated programmes were taken over by the Probation Service in England and Wales, for example, DVPPs focussed their resources on the family courts, risk assessment work, and began working more closely with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS). Work has been undertaken to co-locate DVPP services within Local Authority Children's Services departments (Phillips, 2013) in order to address long standing misalignments between the two services.

This briefing note confirms the findings of existing reviews (Scourfield and Dobash, 1999;

Hamilton et al., 2012), showing a rich diversity of practice underpinned by a gender-based analysis of domestic violence added to therapeutic approaches, and some misunderstandings and resistance to programmes. It officially documents for the first time the importance of the National Practitioners Network, and shows a divergence of policy and practice in England and Wales compared with Scotland, with the Probation Service in England and Wales increasingly divorcing from its voluntary and community sector partners and Scotland becoming closer and more comfortable bedfellows.

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